

# Prabuddha Bharata

वसिष्ठ आश्रित



माधव परामर्शोपेत ।

*Katha Upan. I, iii, 4*

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

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## CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

(XIV.—Continued)

[ Subject: Sankara's want of liberality.—The causes of the downfall of Buddhism.—Holy influence of places of pilgrimage.—Meaning of the Sloka: 'Seeing the Vamana on the car' &c.—Worship of God in His absolute aspect. ]

Thus the talk went on on various subjects and drifted to the topic of Sankaracharya. The disciple was a great adherent of Sankara, so much so that he might even be called a fanatic in this respect. He used to look upon Sankara's Advaita philosophy as the crest of all philosophies, and would be cut to the quick if any one took exception to any pronouncement of Sankara. Swamiji was aware of this and could not bear to see anybody growing crazy over any particular system of doctrines. Whenever he came across fanaticism in anything he would take the opponent's view and by dealing innumerable blows of infallible arguments would batter the narrow bounds of bigotry to pieces.

Swamiji.—Sankara's intellect was sharp like the razor;—he was a good argumentator and a scholar, no doubt of that, but he had no great liberality; his

heart too seems to have been like that. Besides, he used to take great pride in his Brahminism—much like a southern Brahmin of the priest class, you may say. How he has defended in his Commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras that the non-Brahmin castes will not attain to a supreme knowledge of Brahman! And how specious arguments! Referring to Vidura\* he has said, that he (Vidura) had become a knower of Brahman by reason of his Brahmin body in the previous incarnation. Well, if now-a-days any Sudra attains to a knowledge of Brahman, shall we have to side with your Sankara and maintain that because he had been a Brahmin in his previous birth, therefore he has attained to this knowledge? Goodness! What is the

\*Uncle of the Pandava brothers, and a most saintly character, considered to be an incarnation of Dharma.



use of dragging in Brahminism with so much ado? The Vedas have entitled anyone belonging to the three upper castes to a study of the Vedas and the realisation of Brahman, haven't they? So Sankara had no need whatsoever of displaying this curious bit of pedantry on this subject, contrary to the Vedas. And such was his heart that he burnt to death lots of Buddhist monks—by defeating them in argument! And the Buddhists, too, were foolish enough to burn themselves to death, simply because they were worsted in argument! What can you call such an action on Sankara's part except fanaticism? But look at Buddha's heart!—Ever ready to give his own life to save the life of a kid,—what to speak of बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय—'for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many'! See, what a liberality—what a compassion!

Disciple.— Can't we call that attitude of Buddha, too, as another kind of fanaticism, Sir! He went the length of sacrificing his own body for the sake of an animal!

Swamiji.— But consider how much good to the world and its beings came out of that 'fanaticism' of his,—how many monasteries and schools and colleges, how many public hospitals, and veterinary refuges were established, how developed architecture became,—think of that. What was there in this country before Buddha's advent?—only a number of religious principles recorded on bundles of palm leaves—and those too known only to a few. It was Lord Buddha who brought them down to the practical field, and showed how to apply them in the everyday life of the people. In a sense, *he* was the living embodiment of true Vedanta.

Disciple.— But, Sir, it was he who by breaking down the Varnashrama Dharma (duty according to caste and order of life)

brought about a revolution within the fold of Hinduism in India, and there seems to be some truth also in the remark that the religion he preached had been for this reason banished from the soil of India in course of time.

Swamiji.— It was not through his teachings that Buddhism came to such degradation, it was the fault of his followers. By becoming too philosophic they lost much of their breadth of heart. Then gradually the corruption known as Vāmāchāra (unrestrained mixing with women in the name of religion) crept in and ruined Buddhism. Such diabolical rites are not to be met with in any modern Tantra! One of the principal centres of Buddhism was Jagannath or Puri, and you have simply to go there and look at the abominable figures carved on the temple-walls there to be convinced of this. Puri has come under the sway of the Vaishnavas since the time of Ramanuja and Sri Chaitanya. Through the influence of those great personages the place now wears an altogether different aspect.

Disciple.— Sir, the Shastras tell us of various special influences attaching to places of pilgrimage. How far is this claim true?

Swamiji.— When the whole world is the Form Universal of the Eternal Atman, the Isvara, what is there to wonder at in special influences attaching to particular places? There are places where He manifests Himself specially, either spontaneously or through the earnest longing of pure souls, and the ordinary man, if he frequents those places with eagerness, attains their end quite easily. Therefore it may lead to the development of the Self in time to have recourse to holy places. But know it for certain that there is no greater Tirtha (holy spot) than the body of man. Nowhere else is the Atman so manifest as



He is here. That car of Jagannatha that you see is but a concrete emblem of this corporeal car. Haven't you read—आत्मानं रयिनं विद्धि—"Know the Atman to be the owner of the chariot" etc., मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते—"All the gods worship the Vamana (the Supreme Being in a diminutive form) seated in the interior of the body"? The sight of the Atman is the real vision of Jagannatha. And the statement—रये च वामनं दृष्ट्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते—"Seeing the Vamana on the car one is no more subject to rebirth," means this that if you can visualise the Atman who is within you, and disregarding whom you are always identifying yourself with this curious mass of matter, this body of yours,—if you can see Him, then there is no more rebirth for you. If the sight of the Lord's image on a wooden framework would confer liberation on people, then crores of beings would be liberated every year,—specially when there is so much facility of going by rail now-a-days. But I do not mean to say that the notion which devotees in general entertain towards Sri Jagannatha is either nothing or erroneous. There is a class of people who gradually rise to higher and higher truths with the help of that Image. So it goes without saying that in and through that Image there is a special manifestation of the Lord.

Disciple.— Sir, have they got different religions then,—the ignorant and the wise?

Swamiji.— Quite so. Otherwise why do your Scriptures go to such lengths over the specification of the qualifications of an inquirer? All is truth no doubt, but relative truth, different in degrees. Whatever man knows to be truth is of a like nature, some are lesser truths, others higher ones in comparison to them, while the Absolute Truth is God alone. This Atman is altogether dormant in matter,

in man, designated as a living 'being'. He is partially conscious, while in personages like Sri Krishna, Buddha, Sankara the same Atman has reached the superconscious stage. There is a state even beyond that, which cannot be expressed in terms of thought or language—'अवादनसो गोचरम्'.

Disciple.— Sir, there are certain Bhakti sects who hold that we must practise devotion by placing ourselves in a particular attitude or relation with God. They do not understand anything about the glory of the Atman and all that, and even if they are told about it, they advise us to leave it all aside and develop a constant devotional attitude towards the Lord.

Swamiji.— What they say is true to their own case. By repeated practice along this line they too shall feel an awakening of Brahman within them. And what we (Sannyasins) are doing is another kind of practice. We have renounced the world. So how will it suit us to practise by putting ourselves in some worldly relation—such as that of mother, or father, or wife, or son and so forth—with God? To us all these appear to be narrow. Of course it is very difficult to qualify oneself for the worship of God in His absolute, unconditioned aspect. But must we go in for poison because we get no nectar? Always talk and hear and reason about this Atman. By continuing to practise in this way, you will find in time that the Lion (Brahman) will wake up in you too. Go beyond all those relative attitudes—mere sports of the mind. Listen to what Yama says in the Katha Upanishad—

उत्तिष्ठ जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

—Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached!

Here the subject was brought to a close. The bell for taking Prasada rang and the disciple followed Swamiji who went to partake of it.



## OCCASIONAL NOTES.

INDIA is pre-eminently a religious country. Religion is its very life, without which she cannot exist a moment. This is true of her for all time, past, present and future. This is the reason why India has been living to-day notwithstanding thousands of vicissitudes in her political and social life. Look into her ancient scriptures, the Vedas and the Puranas, and you will find that she has paid the greatest attention to the development of her religious life, and the result has been that nowhere else on earth can one find scriptures that can cope in point of depth and variety with those of India. Standing on the vantage-ground of her ancient civilisation India is still a force in the modern world, though the fact may not be patent to all. She may not be universally recognised as such by the present-day world, but he that has eyes will be able to satisfy himself that despite the want of recognition India is still the wonderful land of light and wisdom, of culture and spirituality.

The westernised man of superficial thought will smile in derision at such pronouncements. Well may he, for he is the product of a materialistic civilisation, and must be what his Western teachers have made him. In spite of his boasted superiority of vision, he is but a creature of convention, following what Bacon calls 'the idol of the marketplace.' His mind is accustomed to travel in the ruts of *L. S. D.*, and his sole criterion of measuring the values of things is the amount of creature-comforts the subject in question may bring. He may point out that the West does

not merely look to the comforts of the body, it has advanced intellectual culture, too. But there it ends. There are certain traits which are inherent in particular individuals and they have been so inveterate, so much mixed up with the flesh and blood of that individual that he cannot get rid of them by any means. They have become a part and parcel of his life. And materialism is such a characteristic with the Westerner. However refined he may pose to be, however much he may try to soar beyond materiality, it still lingers in him. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, a garlic pot will smell however much you may wash it. The Westerner forgets that seeking intellectual satisfaction is a subtle kind of pleasure-seeking, and the Indian, accustomed to thinking of the mind as subtle matter, can easily detect it under its veneer of apparent sanctimony.

The Western mind can never cross this intellectual barrier. To him intellect is the highest pinnacle to which man can ascend, and he will not give it up or dethrone it from its high pedestal even though he may see that there are things in heaven and earth which baffle all attempts of the intellect to grapple with. He will still be a votary of Reason, apotheosising it, though the Deity be altogether impotent to take him beyond the miseries of life. So the Westerner will weigh India also in his intellectual balance and, no wonder, will declare her as found wanting. Let it be. Those that are real truth-seekers know that intellect is not the supreme court of authority, that there is a higher and more efficient means of testing.



our knowledge, and will look with equanimity, if not scorn, upon the oracular verdict of the Westernised man.

What is this higher criterion of truth?—it may naturally be asked. It is competent testimony—the evidence of inspired persons. Just as tactuo-muscular perception is the surest proof of the external world, so in the case of the supra-natural world, the realm of spirituality, the words of a Seer, a man of realisation, are the most convincing proof. And you cannot challenge such evidence, for they speak with such power and authority that our doubting nature is overcome, and the truth flashes of itself from its hidden recesses within the heart. One who has eaten his fill just now, will never believe assertions to the contrary by outsiders, for he has the most convincing of arguments,—he is no more hungry. So he can complacently let others prattle whatever they like about him and remain perfectly balanced. Similar is the experience of one who comes in contact with and has his character moulded by an inspired Seer, for he knows in his heart of hearts that his craving is satisfied, that he stands on solid rock, and may easily laugh at the doubts that others may cast at his state,

If the Guru or teacher be powerful enough, if he be a knower of Brahman, and absolutely unselfish, he will not only take the disciple beyond the pale of all physical and mental disquietude, but he will also endow him with power to remove others' bondage also. Like physical objects spirituality also can be transmitted from one person to another, and the qualified disciple has to assimilate it into his life by surrendering himself wholly to his teacher, and trying to practise the

truths inculcated by him with his heart and soul, cheerfully, patiently and with an iron-will. He must have the simplicity of a child, have a burning passion for Truth and be ready to undergo a life-long struggle under the loving direction of his Guru, making purity and a spirit of service his motto. Then in course of time his labours bear fruit through the grace of God and his Guru's blessings and the tangible power of *Guru-shakti* breaks the barriers of ignorance, and all of a sudden flashes forth the illumination that every Hindu believes lies hidden in every soul. Just as the cultivator removes the barrier between one field and another, and the pent-up water rushes of its own force from the higher to the lower field, so the Hindu maintains that the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-blissful Atman lies in every being covered by a veil of ignorance, and as soon as this veil is rent asunder, He manifests Himself of His own nature. Nothing comes to us from outside. Only the obstacle is removed, and what was *already* in us, we are made conscious of. We come to *know* what we have always been, but what, through ignorance, we lost sight of. The teacher here gives the suggestion, and the knowledge flashes of itself. It may be a question of time but the aspirant must be prepared to stake all to achieve this end of human life, the Beatific Vision of the Atman.

This is Realisation, the corner-stone of the spiritual edifice. Without it no religious experience is considered final or valid. It is the *sine qua non* of all claims to religious acquirement. Having this, you may have it tested by two other methods, viz., the confirmation of the scriptures, and the words of your Guru. And just as there is no difference of opinion with



regard to common external objects, so in the spiritual domain also all these three chime in perfect unison. True scriptures are the records of the realisations in the lives of sages dead and gone, so the experiences of the Sadhaka of to-day harmonise quite easily with what is recorded in the scriptures, and the Guru, the man of realisation in whom, more than in any other, the truth-seeker has the highest repose, comes in to corroborate the experience of the disciple. So when these three kinds of experience agree, there is no more doubt or mistake about the truth of the realisation.

We started with the remark that religion is the very soul of India. What we meant by this was that India excels all other countries in the possession of this *religion based upon realisation*. To the Indian, God is no mere word to be found in books

and in the lips of the priests alone, but a *fact*, the supreme fact of life, without which life is 'weary, stale, flat, unprofitable.' He does not look upon God as an extraneous Being sitting high up somewhere, and sternly dispensing justice, but He is our Father, Mother, Friend, all in one. Nay, He is the ear of our ear, the eye of our eye, the life of our life, the Self of our self. He is in us and we are in Him. We are One Existence, eternal, all-knowing and all-blissful. There never was a time when we were separate from Him. That we thought so was due to our ignorance of our true nature. But now, through the grace of the Lord and the Guru, the scales have fallen from the aspirant's eyes and he stands face to face with God—his own Self, in a rapturous union, where thought of the world and its miseries are vanished for ever. It is ineffable Peace and Bliss everlasting!



### SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OR SADHANA.

**I**N all growth of persons who are undergoing any kind of training, mental, or spiritual, there is always a period of stress and storm preceding the living of an ampler life on a higher plane. The evident reason is that those elements or traits of character which have become incorporated in us by repeated living have to be dislodged and the spiritual house set in order, before the higher life can be lived. And these wage a mighty war, "the flesh lusting against the spirit" making the soul grievous. Sometimes the Sadhaka becomes conscious of forces whose existence he had never suspected before, old unconscious thoughts which have

remained hidden and pulled the wire from behind, influencing his life unconsciously; sometimes he sees his evil tendencies and propensities in very intensive forms; this is a period of great difficulty, and embarrassment; there is need of the greatest courage, patience and perseverance to tide over this period of disintegration. The more you struggle, the more involved you seem to be and if we coerce the devil to-day, to-morrow it returns with ten more attendants. The struggle seems endless,—and strong must be the mind and body to bear all this stress. For when one begins to control the Indriyas (the sense-organs) and to starve them, they react with



all their might and the shock of reaction on both body and mind is great enough to break down many a fragile vessel. Sometimes the evil tendencies secrete themselves in a corner of the mind and escape your most searching self-examination; sometimes the faults and short-comings masquerade themselves under very amiable garb as justifiable emotions and impose on you as to their real character. Success in the process of purification depends on the relentless way in which one can attack the citadel of evil and the less mercy you can show to your faults, and on the refusal to accept any excuse from them. For sometimes the difficulty is that we do not summon up sufficient courage to resolve on throwing away our evil tendencies. We read in the confessions of Saint Augustine how during the period of his purification the old habits, tendencies, prepossessions of his unregenerate life took shape and appeared before him and clutched at his garments beseeching him not to leave them, how long he fell a prey to their wily seductions and had not the heart to renounce them, and only when he made his mind strong enough for abjuring them, they ceased to trouble him. Success also depends not on one brilliant act of triumph but in repeated attacks, though always in the defeat. For in the first acts of rebellion against the accumulated force of old habits and tendencies, one is sure to be knocked down but he may be sure of ultimate success if he can summon up sufficient courage and patience to rise every time he falls.

This period, then, of death before life, of the "dark night of the senses" as Christian mystics have said, must be passed before one can emerge into the clear, bright atmosphere of the spiritual life. One whose previous life has not been cor-

rect but a dedication to the senses, cannot by a few quick strokes dislodge them, transplant a new set of ideas and impressions; they will refuse to be so cavalierly treated. The same amount of pleasure which has been experienced in establishing them will have to be repaid by equal amount of pain and anguish of the soul in dislodging them, but one can quicken the process by intensifying the effort. The great Brahmo leader Keshab Ch. Sen has written in the Life-Scriptures that at the early period of his religious life, levity, frivolity and worldly enjoyment appeared to him like messengers of death, and in his own home, when he heard the ordinary talk of the worldly subjects it sounded in his ears like the roaring of a tiger in his path. Sri Ramakrishna's own words are: "In the period of Sadhana one feels as circumspect and alert and fearful of things around him as if he were living in the same room with a cobra." "In moving among worldly things, one feels like walking on the edge of a deep well."

Thus there appears in the first stage of religious life a great contraction of activity. The Sadhaka hedges himself round with protective walls. He deliberately puts the curb on his will and emotions, he sometimes even undergoes physical torture. For all the powers of his body and mind have so long been subservient to the needs of his material life and selfish interests and they have now to be weaned from them, purified and made fit instruments for the expression of the Divine Life. Hence all this travail, torture, and punishment inflicted on the mind and body, and we now understand how naturally in the course of things it occurs to the religious consciousness.

When he has purified his mind sufficiently, he finds that objects which he had



previously abjured as concealing a fetter or appealing to his lower nature cease to have any meaning for him and with the absence of necessity, the hedges which he had built around himself fall away of themselves. His purified religious consciousness then seeks to overleap all boundaries overspreading all departments of life and activity; objects and activities which he had previously denied, he starts by accepting again as channels for the expression of his new regenerate life. They take on new meaning, they are deified and seen in the light of the spirit. This expansion of life considerably broadens his outlook and adds great freedom to his being. As urgent has been the need of

renouncing objects to which he has been selfishly attached before, equally imperative is the call now to break all limitations and remove all barriers from the path of the expanding religious consciousness. The measure of this expansion of spiritual life must be judged as the measure of the greatness of spiritual attainment. "Deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite sky," has been the summing up by Swami Vivekananda of the life of his Master. And as a crowning realisation, all distinctions between spiritual and secular vanish, everything is covered over by the Lord, the whole of nature gives up its secret and the same Lord is seen as present everywhere.

## EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(Translated from Bengali.)

### CXXXVI.

541, Dearborn Avenue, Chicago,  
C/o George W. Hale,  
1894.

My dear —

Very glad to receive your letter. I am very sorry to hear of —'s doings. One always behaves thus in trying to push himself before all others. I am not much to blame. — came here ten years ago, and got much reputation and honour; now I am in flying colours. Such is the will of the Guru, what shall I do? It is childishness on —'s part to be annoyed at this. Never mind, *बहिर्मुखं तद्वचनं भवत्स्वरूपानां महात्मनाम्। अवि कीट-इव नभीरका यद्ये एतच्छ्रुतनवास्तद्वदवशिरवोदिताः।* "अजो कलानाम्भनविश्वेदुर्गं निन्दन्ति मन्दाभरितं महात्मनाम्" इत्यादीनि श्रुत्वा हन्तव्योऽर्थं ज्ञात्वाः।—Great men like you should pay no heed to what he says. Shall we, children of Sri Ramakrishna and nourished with his heart's blood, be

afraid of worm-bites? "The wicked criticise the conduct of the magnanimous, which is extraordinary and whose motives are difficult to fathom,"†—remember all this and forgive this fool. It is the will of the Lord that people of this land have their power of introspection roused, and does it lie in anybody to check His progress? I want no name—I want to be a voice without a form. I do not require anybody to defend me—*कोऽहं तत्त्वाद-प्रसरं प्रतिरोद्धुं समर्थयितुं वा, के वान्ये? तयापि मन इदव-कृतज्ञता तान् प्रति।*—Who am I to check or to help the course of His march? And who are others also? Still, my heartfelt gratitude to them. "वात्मिस्त्यतो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विवाम्यते"—*नेवः प्राप्नवात् तत्त्वदीनिति मन्वा कुरुष्वारुषा इष्टव्योऽवमिति।*—"Established in which state a man is not moved even by great misfortune (Gita)"—that state he has not reached, think of this and

† Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhavam*.



look upon him with pity. Through the Lord's will, the desire for name and fame has not yet crept into my heart, and I dare say, never will. I am an instrument and He is the operator. Through this instrument He is rousing the religious instinct in thousands of hearts in this far-off country. Thousands of men and women here love and revere me. \* \* "मूकं करोति वाचालं पद्मं लक्ष्यते गिरिम्"—He makes the dumb eloquent and makes the lame cross mountains. I am amazed at His grace. Whatever town I visit, it is in an uproar. They have named me "the cyclonic Hindu." Remember, it is His will,—I am a voice without a form.

The Lord knows whether I shall go to England or any other blessed place. He will arrange everything. Here a cigar costs one rupee. Once you get into a cab, you have to pay three rupees; a coat costs a hundred rupees; the hotel charge is nine rupees a day.—The Lord provides everything. \* \* The Lord be praised, I know nothing. "सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् सत्येनैव पन्था विततो देवयानः"—"Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood. Through Truth alone lies the path of Devayāna." You must be fearless. It is the coward who fears and defends himself. Let no one amongst us come forward to defend me. I get all news of Madras and Rajputana, from time to time. \* \* There are eyes that can see at a distance of fourteen thousand miles. It is quite true. Keep quiet now, everything will see the light in time, as far as He wills it. Not one word of His proves untrue. My brother, do men grieve over the fight of cats and dogs? So, the jealousy, envy and elbowing of common men should make no impression on your mind. For the last six months I have been saying, the curtain is going up, the sun is rising, Yes, the curtain *is* lifting, by degrees, slow but sure, you will come to know it in time. *He* knows. One cannot speak out his mind. These are things not for writing. \* \* Never let go your hold of the rudder, grasp it firm. We are steering all

right, no mistaking that, but landing on the other shore is only a question of time. That's all. Can a leader be got up, my brother? A leader is born. Do you follow me? And it is a very difficult task to take on the role of a leader.—One must be दासस्य दासः—a servant of servants, and must accommodate a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or selfishness, then you are a leader. First, by birth, and secondly, unselfish,—that's a leader. Everything is going all right, everything will come round. He casts the net all right, and winds it up likewise—व्यमनुसरामः वयमुत्तरामः। प्रीतिः परमसाधनम्।—ours is but to follow. Love is the best instrument. Love conquers in the long run. It won't do to become impatient—wait, wait,—patience is bound to give success. \* \*

I tell you, brother, let everything go on as it is, only take care that no form become necessary—unity in variety—see that universality be not hampered in the least. Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment, *universality*. Whether I live or die, whether I go back to India or not, remember this specially, that universality—perfect acceptance, not tolerance only—we preach and perform. Take care how you trample on the least rights of others. Many a huge ship has foundered in that whirlpool. Remember, perfect devotion minus its bigotry—this is what we have got to show. Through His grace everything will go all right. \* \* Everybody wants to be a leader, but it is the failure to grasp that he is *born*, that causes all this mischief. \* \*

Our Matrons are all hale and hearty, I hope? Where is Mother —? We want a thousand such Mothers, with that noble stirring spirit. \* \* We want all. It is not at all necessary that all would have the same faith in our Lord as we have, but we want to unite all the powers of goodness against all the powers of evil. \* \* A besetting sin with Sannyasins is the taking pride in their monastic



order. That may have its utility during the first stages, but when they are full-grown, they need it no more. One must make no distinction between householders and Sannyasins—then only one is a true Sannyasin. \* \*

A movement which half a dozen penniless boys set on foot and which now bids fair to progress in such an accelerated motion,—is it a humbug or the Lord's will? If it is, then let all give up party spirit and jealousy, and make united action. A universal religion cannot be set up through party faction. \* \*

If all understand one day for one minute that one cannot become great by the mere wish, that he only rises whom He raises, and he falls whom He brings down, then all trouble is at an end. But there is that egotism,—hollow in itself, and without the power to move a finger: how ludicrous of it to say, 'I won't let anyone rise!' That jealousy, that absence of conjoined action is the very nature of enslaved nations. But we must try to shake it off. That terrible jealousy is characteristic of us. \* \* You will be convinced of this if you visit some other countries. Our fellows in this respect are the enfranchised Negroes of this country—if but one amongst them rises to greatness, all the others would at once set themselves against him and try to level him down by making a common cause with the whites. \* \*

At any cost, any price, any sacrifice, we must never allow that to creep in among ourselves. Whether we be ten or two, do not care, but those few must be perfect characters. \* \* 'It is not good to ask of one's father if the Lord looks after the provision.' And the Lord *will* do so, set your minds easy on that score. \* \* We must spread his name in Rajputana, Punjab, U. P., Madras, and such other provinces—yes, in Rajputana, where still there are people who can say, 'Such has ever been the custom with Raghu's line that they keep their word even at the cost of life.'

A bird, in the course of its flight, reaches a spot whence it looks on the ground below with supreme calmness. Have you reached that spot? He who has not reached there has no right to teach others. Relax your limbs and float with the current, and you are sure to reach your destination.

Cold is making itself scarce by degrees, and I have been almost through the winter. Here in winter the whole body becomes charged with electricity. In shaking hands one feels a shock, accompanied by a sound. You can light the gas with your finger. And about winter, I have written to you already. I am coursing through the length and breadth of the country, but Chicago is my 'Math,' where I always return after my wanderings. I am now making for the east. He knows where the bark will reach the shore. \* \*

Has — the same sort of love for you? Does he see you frequently? How is B—and what is he doing? Do you visit him, and look upon him with an eye of regard? Yes, brother, the distinction between Sannyasin and layman is a fiction, 'मूकं करोति वाचालं' &c.—He makes the dumb fluent &c. My friend, it is difficult to judge what is in a particular individual. He (Sri Ramakrishna) has spoken highly of him and he deserves our respect. Pie upon you if you have no faith even after so much experience! Does he love you? Please convey to him my hearty love and esteem. My love to K—, he is a very noble soul. How is —? Has he got a little faith and devotion? My love and greetings to —. — is moving all right with the mill, I suppose? Ask him to have patience and the mill will go on all right. My heart's love to all.

Ever yours in love,

Vivekananda.





## SHANTI ASHRAMA DAYS.

(BY A WESTERN DISCIPLE.)

THE last lectures by Swami Vivekananda on the Pacific Coast were delivered in San Francisco in May, 1900. They were on the Bhagavad Gita and were given at the residence of the since deceased Dr. Logan, the first president of the Vedanta Society which was founded by the Swami. These lectures were attended mainly by students who had followed the Swami through all or most of his discourses and classes in San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda, and were in character as well as in point of time the culmination of all his platform and class work. They were his final words of advice and admonition to his students and devotees who under Swami Turiyananda were soon to enter upon a new phase of the Vedanta work in the establishment of the Shanti Ashrama.

One great theme was carried through all the Swami's teachings, and that was the necessity for spiritual self-reliance. "Religion is for the strong," he shouted again and again. So in conclusion he took up the Gita, dwelling on the error of Arjuna in confounding his spiritual welfare with his disinclination to tread the stern path of duty as it was laid out for him by the energies of his nature which had not yet been neutralized by spiritual culture. He made it clear, however, that Arjuna really did know his duty, but that his eyes were temporarily blinded by his moral weakness in facing the supreme crisis of his life because apparently it led into the jaws of death. He further brought out the point that Arjuna fortified his position by spiritual sophistry.

He stood before us arrayed in his Sannyasin garb, reading from the original Sanskrit, translating and expounding. With a few prefatory remarks on the first chapter he launched into the second chapter. The great point he brought out was the attitude of mind one should assume in meeting the real problems of life. The greatest obstacle to the right attitude of mind, he said, was fear of the difficult. So he said, "Be brave! Be strong! Be fearless! Once you have taken up the spiritual life, fight as long as there is any life in you. Even

though you know you are going to be killed, fight till you *are killed*. Don't die of fright. *Die fighting*. Don't go down till you *are knocked down*." Then with his right arm extended he thundered, "Die game! Die game! Die game!" That one sentence rang through those last lectures, "Die game! Die game! Die game!" They were his farewell words to his disciples, his goodbye. Then he was gone, and the supreme epoch of my life was a thing of the past, but a thing of the past in name only. He still lives perhaps as virile as ever, at any rate not less real than before. Through his *being* I know that *God is*. He opened the spiritual eyes, revealing in intermittent flashes the Light beyond the darkness, which disclosed winding away into the indefinite future the tortuous, thread-like way of spiritual endeavour.

While he was here one drank in the sweetness of his wonderful love, absorbed the spiritual nectar by mere contact. Now came the time to think it all over, to digest what had been taught, and to blaze the trail for one's self which must, sooner or later, bring him face to face with the Reality which the Swami's personality revealed not too strongly for the world-soaked mind to stand. But he left us with these humble words: "I will send you another, a greater than I, one who lives what I talk about. I will send you Swami Turiyananda." We wondered what such a being would be like, and looked forward with senses strained for the revelation. Then the great Swami Turiyananda came. He came in childlike sweetness and humility, vibrant with spiritual fire, in the words of Ramakrishna Paramahansa Himself, "fresh as a newly-blown flower, and pure as a dew-drop." His personality touched us where we lived, and led far and away into the bright eternity awaiting our comprehension.

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda towered into the blinding light of pure spirituality ages beyond our grasp. Swami Vivekananda outlined the entire scope of the Vedanta, stirring into life dormant possibilities and bestowing life where before there was none. Swami Turiyananda



directed and trained the mind to stand alone and to be loyal to the impetus gained.

With the coming of Turiyananda the Shanti Ashrama sprang into existence and a new chapter was entered upon; not a chapter dealing with different phases of the Vedanta from what had already been outlined, but one bringing into prominence a personal touch which developed our powers of introspection and stirred into activity those rational and emotional energies which constitute religious enthusiasm. The energies of the mind were trained to think along thought-currents into which our lives had been turned by Swami Vivekananda, if not actually to meditate.

To what extent had the mind been merely passive to the Swami's personality? It is one thing to be taken possession of by an embodiment of spirituality, such as Vivekananda, but quite another to regain possession of one's self and consciously build into one's life somewhat of the wisdom of the master. He gave to us the priceless heritage of ages of spiritual culture. He held before our very eyes the mystic mirror of self-revelation. One caught fleeting glimpses of himself as the conscious subjective entity of innumerable personalities which in the crucible of lives had been cast aside as inadequate. Now could he hold the vision till his personality had thrown off its Tâmasic density and excessive Râjasic nature so that he would know for certain the Reality of his being in, if need be, many recurrent personalities? Henceforth would the mind work in sustained effort to the elimination of obstacles? Or as soon as the novelty wore off would consciousness again sink into the age-worn ruts and feel itself swept along by that strange, irresistible Karmic current? It all depended upon the mind's reaction to the influence given it. It was right here on the threshold of such considerations that Swami Turiyananda took hold of the situation. The days of listening to mere lectures were over. Students now gathered about the Swami in classes and went to him for personal guidance.

Although Swami Turiyananda particularly imprompted me to go to the Ashrama, the Fates decreed otherwise, and I was doomed to see him depart for India without being with him at the Ashrama. The pain of this was somewhat mitigated by my experience with him in Oakland.

His presence converted my home into an Ashrama. Priceless were those long, intimate talks and councilings with him, and attempts at meditation in the sanctity of his presence. We took many long morning and evening walks which, though tangibly through city streets, were in a finer and truer reality far from the locale of industrial life. They led into the immeasurable distances of spiritual idealism. We walked into the sun-rise and into the sun-set bathed in a radiance more glorious than any terrestrial sun. I was being initiated into the inner philosophic and spiritual life of India, India whose towering Himalayan peaks are as symbols of her sages whose thoughts rest in the eternal Presence of God.

The reports of the Ashrama by those who had made pilgrimages there with the Swami were uniformly enthusiastic in its praise. Desiring to know the Swami's personal idea of the place I asked, "Swami, is the Ashrama really such an ideal place?"

"Yes," he replied, "it is an ideal place,—for an Ashrama."

"What do you mean by 'ideal for an Ashrama'?" I queried.

"It is a good place to meditate on God," he answered, giving a little characteristic backward tilt to his head and looking at me with an amused expression in his half-closed eyes.

"What significance will a place like the Ashrama have in Western civilisation?" I asked.

"The same it has in any civilisation where the people want to know God. As people become spiritually minded in any country, a place to retire to from time to time becomes a necessity. Even the most spiritual men retire from the world occasionally even though their particular work is in the world."

Then one bright day I met G. He came to Oakland from the Ashrama for a short visit. This event was momentous to me. I had heard much about him from Swami Turiyananda, and had been looking forward to this meeting with the happiest expectancy. I could not know, however, how much the coming years held for me in a deep spiritual sense through his loving friendship. G. was a Westerner with all the educated Westerner's practical knowledge at his finger-tips. But like others who aspire to become spiritual characters, he turned from the life for which he was trained



throwing all the energy of his mind into the work of knowing God. That he was on the way to success, there was not the slightest doubt in the minds of those who knew him. It was just this that made his life significant. His example was a wonderful source of encouragement, a constant incitement to be "up and doing" at every moment. In time we grew to revere him as a noble character of supreme poise whose conduct to the most trivial details of his daily life was beyond the possibility of criticism even to the Western mind which is naturally on the look-out for some little irregularity to quibble over. As was stated in a previous article, the Shanti Ashrama owed its existence to his career, thus demonstrating that genuine necessity is the mother of opportunity. He gave himself without reservations to the Lord, and the time came when it was vitally necessary for him to be protected from the money-mad world in which he was living his intense life of devotion to God. Then one of the faithful stepped forward and gave the place which became the Shanti Ashrama, and the matter was settled.

The lure of the Ashrama now became stronger than ever. I looked forward to going there with an enthusiasm which knew no bounds, but it was not until after Swami Turiyananda had left for India that the day of opportunity came. The Swami Trigunatita with a number of students was there for a month; circumstances permitted me to remain but two weeks. There were ten of us of varied dispositions, view-points and expectations, a merry party, who one bright November morning started for the Ashrama. The first night was spent in San Jose, and on the following morning we journeyed to Mt. Hamilton by team. From this prominent peak of the Coast Range mountains, some 4200 feet above the sea, ridge after ridge of timbered mountains tier downwards as far as the eye can reach. Nestled thirty miles distant in the depth of those wooded hills is the Shanti Ashrama. About seven o'clock in the evening we drew rein at the Ashrama gate, and were cheerily greeted by G. Supper was in waiting and we had a jolly time of it during the meal. The Swami was in his usual happy mood, telling stories and cracking jokes and teasing each one of us in turn. After supper came the work of settling for the night. At first there was some confusion as to the allot-

ment of tents, but finally things were temporarily arranged and at ten o'clock we were wrapped in slumber dreaming of the morrow and of the succession of days to be spent there.

The next day dawned bright and clear and was passed in putting up tents and settling into permanent quarters. There were two log-cabins on the Ashrama, G.'s cabin and the tool-house. The meditation-cabin was a light board affair about twelve by fifteen feet in size, and a cabin once occupied by Swami Turiyananda was also of light boards. The dining room was canvas built out from a shack, which was used as a kitchen. Each one slept in a tent. I was given the tent occupied on former occasions by Swami Turiyananda, the only place I really coveted. It was situated on the most beautiful place in the Ashrama, on an eminence overlooking the greater portion of the Ashrama. The spot was practically level, and was made inviting on hot days by a cluster of oak trees. From this place I looked about me on the land of my dreams and found it good to look upon; and it was good also to breathe deeply of the pure, dry air heavily laden with the fragrance of wild growth.

The Ashrama is just a segment of a typical California cow-country. From the flag-pole, situated between the meditation cabin and the dining room, it extended to its eastern boundary in a rolling field of aromatic tar-weed with here and there clusters of oaks. The western and southern portions were cut up into rugged ravines with successive chapparel-covered hills with patches of pine, oak and manzanita. The Santa Ysable creek traverses the place in a south-easterly direction.

The days passed in reading, talking and meditating. Each one did his share in the practical work. The women took turns in cooking and washing dishes; and the men in carrying water, cutting wood and odd jobs. It was an experiment which, all things considered, turned out as favourably as one could optimistically expect. On the surface it was just a prolonged picnic; under the surface it was what each made of it. The prolonged commingling of diverse dispositions in a new venture naturally gave rise to many occasions for self-restraint and not a few for self-abasement.

The Swami had a merry time of it adjusting conditions as adjustment was needed and in giving



advice and encouragement in general. He enjoyed himself and made no attempt to conceal it. He was bubbling over with good spirits, and was ever ready for a romp or a contest of wits.

G. with his keen visage and penetrating, clear, blue eyes moved among us a figure apart. He did not by any means hold himself aloof, but, on the contrary, entered into the give and take contests with the rest. But, clearly, he was a good witness. Serious, at times abstractly so, he was, notwithstanding, open to friendly and familiar approach. Again and again his eyes would fairly dance with suppressed mirth. At times he would give vent to outright laughter, and at such times it was as if God were with him in his fun. I availed myself of every opportunity to come into personal touch with him. His personality had an irresistible fascination for me, for to my mind there was no doubt but that God had drawn him closely to Himself. As in the cases of Swamis Vivekananda and Turiyananda, the character of G. was an assurance of the existence of God, an intimate and loving God actually present with us in every event of our common life.

Life at the Ashrama was routine. The days began at 5-30 in the morning and closed commonly at 10 o'clock at night. G. was the first one up in the morning taking upon himself the duty of arousing the camp. He would walk from tent to tent chanting Om, Om, Om, pausing at each tent until he received a response before proceeding to the next. Could a more auspicious opening of the day be imagined than to be aroused from sleep by the sonorous intoning of Om? Many mornings I was awake before he made his round and would lie waiting to hear the first far-off sound of his voice as he began his chanting. Gradually his voice drew nearer and nearer until it sounded directly in front of my tent. I would answer immediately by chanting Om, whereupon he would turn away, his deep-toned chanting gradually dying away in the distance.

There were three meditation classes a day,—one in the morning before breakfast, again before lunch and again before supper. At these classes the Swami read something, after which we meditated. After that we asked questions, talked and made merry. Very pleasant memories cluster about the meditation cabin. The weather was

cold, being November, and we were forced to have warm fires while sitting. The odour of the burning wood filled the room as with the fragrance of incense. We sang and chanted, joked, told stories and played with philosophical questions. Everyone had good intentions. The little band was welded together, I am sure, by the association into a bond which is sure to survive this present lifetime.

Two special practices were introduced by the Swami during my stay there,—that of solitary retirement, and that of the *dhuney-fire*. The retirement experiment consisted in each one going into retirement without food or water for twenty-four hours. The time was supposed to be devoted as continuously to prayer and meditation as possible. The period began at day-break and terminated at day-break the following morning. The Swami made periodical rounds to see how each one was progressing. I got along all right the greater part of the day. In the late afternoon I was attacked with nausea and by ten o'clock it had grown so violent that I thought discretion the better part of valour and went deliberately to bed in which place I was found the next morning instead of sitting in *padma* posture lost to the external world. This was a surprise to everyone save myself, and especially to those who knew me best. But no one knew me as I knew myself and hence there was no surprise on my part. That I was not a stoic had been demonstrated to my entire satisfaction on many previous occasions. I think that I was the only one who got sick, though I was not the only one who went to bed. In commenting on it the Swami said that he thought I showed considerable fortitude in not howling for help, instead fighting it out alone. I think he meant well enough, though I must confess I thought it a rather dubious compliment. I shall always be glad for the attempt, however, for thereby I gained some valuable experience.

In the course of a few days the *dhuney-fire* event took place. It turned out to be a symbolic and picturesque affair. It had rare artistic values, and went down in memory as one of my unforgettable experiences. We knew it was going to take place long beforehand; in fact, before we left for the Ashrama it was the one big feature which we were looking forward to with keen curiosity. Finally the day



came on the night of which we were to have the fire. The men busied themselves in gathering sufficient logs to keep a fire burning throughout the night. These logs were placed on a prominent knoll and everything put in readiness for the event. About eight o'clock we gathered about the log-pile ready for the fire. Each one had a blanket thrown about him and a pillow for a seat. It was a cold, cloudless, moon-lit night. The fire was lighted and we took our seats around the welcome blaze. The flames shot upward in the night, intensifying the darkness beyond, obliterating all distant objects save the black outline of the hills silhouetted against the moon-lit sky. For a time we sat in silence, each one apparently enjoying the novelty of the scene. Wrapped in blankets and seated cross-legged around the fire, it occurred to me that we resembled somewhat a band of American Indians seated in council around their camp-fire.

The stillness was broken by the crackling of the flames as they greedily licked up the dry, aromatic wood and by the incessant barking of coyotes, whose sharp, vicious yelps came from all quarters at once; now seemingly right upon us, and now receding into the distance and ending in one lone, long, hungry wail far away in some ravine. Then the wild chorus would break out in renewed fury. They came so close at times that I could hear the ferocious, guttural snarl at the end of a series of lusty, savage barks, just before fresh breath was taken for another series. They serenaded us throughout the night, and not until the sun rose did the last snappy yelp die away in the distance.

After sitting for a while in the stillness described, my attention was drawn to the human side of the situation by the sonorous voice of the Swami, chanting in Sanskrit. Then he explained the purpose of the *dhuney*-fire. Each one was supposed to take serious issue with himself, to delve deeply into his subconscious mind, dissect its content and mentally cast into the fire all taint which could in its working out develop into an obstacle to the knowledge of God. Then we sang, chanted and meditated at intervals.

At first when the fire showed signs of waning, some one would replenish it from the stock of logs at hand. Replenishing the fire, by the way, was a coveted job during the first half of the night

as it afforded a legitimate excuse to stand up and stretch the limbs. Before Morpheus made his rounds that fire was diligently kept alive; afterwards it was attended by those who happened to feel most in need of it. After midnight, enthusiasm to maintain an upright position waned all around the circle. Little by little each one dropped under the strain, and then one by one gave up the struggle and made him comfortable for the night. Some lay down and sat up at intervals. Perhaps they could meditate better in a recumbent position. I will not judge; but I know that I lay down the better to sleep. The Swami, G. and Dhira were the only ones who remained sitting throughout the night. The sun was up before we disbanded. A heavy dew had fallen during the night and the blankets had to be hung up to dry. That day all were released from formal meditation. The Swami was suffering intensely from a tooth-ache and everyone was in need of rest.

At the expiration of two weeks my first experience at the Ashrama terminated. All things considered the trip was well worth while. Days together spent in close personal touch with different dispositions in the common endeavour to draw close to God could not but be productive of happy incidents in the unwitting disclosures of character which the periodic meeting at classes in the city could not afford. New friendships were formed and old ones deepened whose fragrance will always be with us as the years pass, and finally when we pass.

The distance from the meditation cabin to the Ashrama-gate was about a quarter of a mile. It was a winding road lined with oaks and pines and affording many pleasant views into near-by woody swails and nooks on the one hand, and over open rolling country to where the sky-line met the ridge of mountains on the other. How many miles were traversed by us all from time to time along this road as we talked and talked and idealised together! The really momentous hours to me, hours which were more than pleasant, more than happy, which tapped the hidden springs of consciousness, were spent with G. Along this road we walked into great distances with that sure and steady step which led away from the confinements of past traditional life into the unexplored territory of the care-free life of Sannyasa. With him



there were no idle moments. Conversation flowed easy and deep, now slowly as emotional life was stirred to its depths, now lightly as the guise of caprice reflected the clear depth of his mind. From him there were no tricks or rejoinder; the utmost sincerity and comradely freedom being ever present. It was this contact which placed a spiritual halo about that first Ashrama experience, and which made a second trip inevitable.

Then intervened a time of probation for and anticipation of the day when I would be permitted to see the Ashrama again. Finally the day dawned, August 19, 1905. Now no one knows better than I that, despite the contact with great souls, there is no well-beaten highway to spirituality. Each wayfarer must hoe his own road. The actual course

of the illumine closes after him without leaving a trace, like the way of an aviator through trackless space. There are, however, some guide-signs, some verbal directions, which successful mariners of spiritual depths have left for such as would follow. These are universally accepted though they are malleable to temperament, temperature, grades of intelligence and emotional fluctuations. Each attempt, therefore, to follow advice intended to indicate the general course of a spiritual aspirant is an adventure into the trackless wastes of the mind, into the sterile regions of thought-delusion, into the labyrinths of thought-creation or happily beyond into the Light.

(To be continued.)

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA AND HIS RELIGIOUS MESSAGE TO THE MODERN WORLD.

*(The gist of a paper read by Mr. V. C. Seshacharry, B. A., B.L. at the 83rd Birthday Anniversary of  
Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna at the Bangalore Math.)*

IT gladdens my heart to see the several hundreds of people gathered here under the one common impulse of offering respectful homage to the high and exalted memory of the most distinguished of Mother India's modern saints, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. This is indeed a rare occasion, which is sure to produce in our hearts a thrill of exquisite joy and ineffable bliss.

We seem to live in an age of ferment when competitive commercialism with its ever aggrandising policy is still keeping at bay co-operative industrialism. Scarcely had the waves of Godless education and rank materialism made their appreciable advance on modern humanity when we find ourselves caught in the overpowering deluge which presently threatens to annihilate the charming solitude, the lofty isolation and the sweet simplicity, alike calculated to promote the ever-growing peace and harmony in man's bosom. Look in what direction you like, whether in fields of social, political or religious activity, you are faced with the spectacle of humanity being impelled by sordid selfishness instead of by sublime spirituality.

This then is the sorry spectacle of the unfathomable abyss into which the bulk of humanity has plunged itself to-day.

The comity of nations has become a mere mockery and individualistic and nationalistic competition has worked for exclusion and elimination of the weak. Might has become the right of the strongest and in this sharp conflict, the weakest must inevitably go to the wall. In ancient days, fierce crusades were conducted in the name of religion and God and now after ages of enlightened civilisation with humanistic ideals, we feel and realise we are less human. Never in the history of the world did we witness such unspeakable agitation, fierce ferment, and universal unrest.

It is worth one's while to reflect on the various currents and cross-currents along which humanity is drifting to-day. What lends absorbing interest to this reflection is the query, Does the present situation make for chaos and confusion or for cosmos and harmony? Is life an empty dream signifying nothing or a living reality pregnant with purpose? The answer comes in faint echoes from a far distance that the discord of to-day will



become the concord of to-morrow and the present harrowing pain and suffering will lead us to future joy and pleasure ineffable. Increasing difference must ultimately land us in increasing unity. The depth of hell may spell as the height of Heaven. The world of to-day grown weary with its interminable woes and worries fondly longs for lasting harmony and eternal peace. The throes of present torment will cease and will bring us into a region of quiet and joy. Selfishness, difference, discord and competition will yield their place to altruism, unity, fraternity and co-operation. India, the mother of all religions, has ever stood for a spiritual synthesis of life constructed on renunciation and love. Time and again, she has proclaimed from her Himalayan tops the expansive and harmonising power and potency of spiritual life. There are no doubt pessimists who are inclined to the view that the varied social barriers and class and caste differences which still exist in our land may work for separation and division and not for union and solidarity. According to them the Western contact has introduced a new militant culture, which is highly fascinating on account of its siren voice and sweet seduction. But to those who own the clearness of vision and can see things in their right perspective, the existence and operation of forces which are already working to bring about the union and strength of the Indian nation as a whole are matters of easy discernment. It must also be conceded that from one point of view complexity and heterogeneity are essentially the stepping-stones to a larger simplicity and homogeneity. In this sacred land of ours which has always been recognised as the spiritual battleground of humanity, warring ideals and keen conflicts can be quelled and reconciled by the peace-inducing light of true Vedanta.

In recent years there has sprung up in our land a school of thought which seems to gain in prestige by attempting to proclaim that religion should be divorced from social and political life, on the ground that it encourages mysticism and quietism and that philosophy which teaches man to realise God within himself is an apathetic feeling of inertia which is calculated to kill all national activity. The futility of this theory is quite apparent and needs no lengthy argumentation to refute it. In the Western countries and continents

where individualism and self-sufficiency have been marching on the crest of the top-wave of advancing materialism, we see to-day the ruinous results of such ungodly tendencies and inclinations.

To us it is almost axiomatic that the vitality of a nation depends entirely on its religious ideals and upon its religious men who not only preach such ideals but also practise them. This Bhârata-varsha was at its best at the time of its greatest sages. The birth of a sage in our land signifies a high watermark in the tide of enlightened civilisation. It is a cosmic event and the whole world which till then seemed to wear a dull aspect feels rejuvenated and thrills with joy at the occurrence of such an auspicious event. We shall now turn our thoughts to the sublime life-history of the Messiah of this Age—Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and try to find solace from his gospel of universal strength and peace and love.

Four scores and two years have rolled by, since the garden of humanity put forth its fairest bud which in the fulness of time grew into the loveliest blossom in the person of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the fragrance of whose living memory is still wafting aloft in sweet-smelling waves, to enrich and enliven human thoughts all over the living world. Truly did Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna sum up in his life the highest and noblest ideals of philosophy and religion, and the practical realisation of the precepts he preached enhances the value of his teachings to his direct disciples and the thousands upon thousands of thinking men who have in recent years caught the inspiration of his life and quaffed it deep almost to the point of intoxication. To him religion was the bedrock on the solid foundation of which the edifice of a nation's greatness was to build. If I but attempt to faintly lisp his message to the modern world I feel that I shall not be able to do justice to the sublimity of the topic in hand. But it will prove a source of immense satisfaction to me if I but succeed, in however small a measure, in rousing a spark of religious fervour and devotion in the bosom of every one present here to-day.

On the memorable date of the 17th February, 1836, the baby eyes of Sri Ramakrishna opened to the light of earthly existence, at a little village called Kamarpukur in the District of Hugli in Bengal, which has now become famous as the



birthplace of the greatest of Indian Sages of modern times whose life and teachings have penetrated into every nook and corner of this earth and have enlivened many a dark home.

His parents came of a highly respected though poor Brahmin family and the only wealth they possessed was spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna's father, Khudiram Chattopadhyaya, was a pious devotee and his affectionate mother, Chandramani Devi, was the personification of love and kindness. There were early signs of future greatness marked out in indelible characters both in his childhood and in his youth. He picked up the three R's in his village school and even as a child was taught to lead a pure and pious life by his parents. He showed a remarkable aptitude to learn holy songs and it was a source of immense delight to him to recite the same. His manners were sweet and simple and men, women and children were all fond of him and loved to possess him. In youth he became imbued with the life and teachings of the various incarnations of God. We shall not be far wrong if we said that every fibre of his body was attuned to the highest philosophical and religious ideals, so much so that when he was only seven years old he saw within himself a transcendent vision of glory. To the ignorant it seemed as if he were in a state of unconscious fit. But to students of Religion it spelt verily the higher consciousness of the stage of *Samadhi* which represents the highest rung in the ladder of Yoga.

You had only to look into his eyes to catch a glimpse of the serenity of his soul, the eyes being verily the windows thereof. He practised in himself a universal tolerance, a great harmony and supreme love. When he was barely seventeen, he repaired to Calcutta with his elder brother for further study and looking after his household. And when the temple at Dakshineswar, a village 4 miles from Calcutta, was built by a pious Bengalee lady in affluent circumstances known as Rani Rasmani, Pandit Ram Kumar, the elder brother of Sri Ramakrishna was constituted the officiating priest of the temple and later Sri Ramakrishna himself was appointed assistant priest there. The image of Mother Kali had a fascination for him and riveted his attention. Thinking that marriage might bring him round to worldly pursuits, his

people married Sri Ramakrishna to Sri Saradamanjari Devi, the daughter of Ram Chandra Mukhopadhyaya of Joyrambati, the bride being only 6 years old. After marriage he returned to the temple garden at Dakshineswar and the worship of the Mother Kali became his daily routine and by his earnestness and passionate love he was soon blessed with a vision of his Divine Mother, and on many an occasion he enjoyed the ecstatic bliss of the superconscious stage. The carnal idea of marriage never appealed to him and his consort was looked upon as a helpmate and the marriage itself was but a union of souls for the achievement of higher ends.

Sri Ramakrishna received his grounding in the Tantra Shastra at the hands of a devout Brahmin lady who recognised him as an incarnation of Sri Chaitanya, the Super-man of Nadia. He now reached a turning point in his life and one day met in the temple garden the famous Tota Puri who initiated him into Sannyasa and preached to him the sublimity of the Vedanta philosophy. In three days he reached the culmination of this Sadhana, attaining the highest or Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Soon the teacher recognised that his disciple was the veriest crucible of action in which all dross was burnt up, leaving behind the immaculate pure gold. Sri Ramakrishna desired very much to acquaint himself with all the priceless teachings of the great religions prevailing in India and abroad, including various forms of Vaishnavism, Christianity and Mahomedanism, and he believed that in order to assimilate them and make them part and parcel of his nature he could not do better than live the life of the prophet of each religion. Strange to say he succeeded in realising the highest ideals of each religion in an incredibly short time and thus qualified himself for the lofty role of the world-teacher that he was destined to play in future. His ever-increasing piety, his God-intoxicated life, his extreme renunciation of lust and gold, the ceaseless flow of words of wisdom, simple, clear and convincing, his wonderful insight into human character, his universal toleration and world-embracing love, these and a thousand other qualities of head and heart soon brought round him a growing number of admirers, among them Keshub Chandra Sen who brought him to the notice of the Calcutta



public, and towards the end of the year 1882, Narendra, later known as the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda—the foremost of his disciples, joined him, together with a number of others, and grew in the likeness of his much revered and beloved master. The supreme monarch of the spiritual kingdom Sri Ramakrishna applied himself heart and soul to form the character of these boys so that they might realise their inmost nature and serve as teachers of mankind.

He then had his exit from the arena of this world in August 1886, leaving it much better than he had found it.

Having very briefly dwelt upon the early life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and invited your attention to the several steps which the Bhagavan took in his spiritual career, for the attainment of the goal of Vedanta, in other words, the union between the Undifferentiated (the Universal) Soul and the Differentiated (the individualised) Soul, it is my wish next to present before you, in however meagre a way, the message conveyed by his wonderful teachings and interesting parables. The foremost topic is the idea of the Unity of Godhead which the Bhagavan has proclaimed in his characteristically lucid words of wisdom:—

“Many are the names of God and infinite the forms that help us to know Him. By whatsoever name or form you desire to know Him, in that very form and under that very name will you see Him.

“Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God, various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of the Mother Kali at Kalighat. Similarly various are the ways that lead to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of such paths that lead to God.”

Another topic of interest on which the Bhagavan has discoursed is the Philosophy of the Unconditioned, in regard to which he has said:—

“Knowledge leading Godward is the last and topmost step of the stairs leading to the roof. The Absolute is the roof. The phenomenal world is made up of that which leads Godward and that which does not. Thus God the Absolute is above and beyond the phenomenal world.

“The Absolute again is like the unfathomable ocean. Nothing can be predicated of It—the Being

beyond the bounds of Reality, of all existence! The last feeble attempt to describe the Being—the attempt made in the Vedas is to call Him by the name of Bliss Everlasting.”

This is why the Great Mystery defies all attempts at explanation. The Absolute and Unconditioned cannot be stated in terms of the Relative, the Conditioned. The Infinite cannot be expressed in terms of the Finite.

“God the Absolute cannot be thought of apart from the idea of God with attributes or God Personal and *vice versa*. The Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Noumenon, the Substance, on the one hand, and the Conditioned, the Relative, the Phenomena, the Attributes, on the other hand, are correlatives—the one cannot be thought of apart from the other.

“Vijnánis are they who have realised God in Samadhi, both as the Impersonal or Undifferentiated and as the Personal or Differentiated.”

The above statements will enable the student of Vedanta philosophy to realise how hard to tread is the path of Jnana-Yoga which is only intended for the few who are accustomed to live in the world of thought.

A third topic is Faith or Shraddhâ, regarding which the following are the Paramahansa's aphorisms:—

“Faith is omnipotent, reason is weak. Faith will work wonders, reason cannot go far enough and must stop at some point or other.

“Before faith the powers of nature all shrink and give way. You get over seas and mountains with perfect ease and utter indifference.

“He who has faith has all and who lacks faith lacks all.”

It is therefore evident that faith is the cardinal stone of the path of Bhakti-Yoga, the path intended for the large majority of people who cannot ascend the steep and narrow path of Jnana-Yoga.

Sri Ramakrishna's ideas in regard to Karma-Yoga are well expressed in the following passages:—

“Work for the sake of one's own worldly good—riches, honour, fame—is degrading; worldly activity will only bring an increasing ignorance.”

That being so, let all work be done as it ought to be. If work is done unattached it will lead to God. Work so done is a means to the end, and



God is the end. To work without any attachment is to work without the expectation of any reward, or fear of any punishment in this world or the next. It is possible for the ideal man alone to live a perfect life of work without attachment. Let us however try our best to do the duty that is nearest us. Let us purify our motives for work by earnest prayer and self-surrender.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was of opinion that among the three paths, that of Bhakti was the one which was suitable for the ordinary householder, because all that it required was intense devotion, firm faith and great love on the part of the devotees to their Ishta Devatā (Chosen Ideal).

The teachings given on the most abstruse subjects of philosophy were always made clear by the Bhagavan by his homely sayings which contained the inner truth that remained therein.

Numerous are the themes of kaleidoscopic variety over which Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has discoursed to his dear and devoted disciples, and the disciples lived, moved and had their being in their master and each reflected a portion of his wonderful and many-sided personality.

Swami Vivekananda speaks of his master's message to the modern world in his usual ringing voice thus:—

"Stand you up and realise God! If you can renounce all wealth and all sex, it will not be necessary for you to speak. Your lotus will have blossomed, and the spirit will spread. Whoever approaches you will be warmed, as it were, by the fire of your spirituality.

"Care not for doctrines or for dogmas, for sects or for churches. All these count for but little, compared with that essence of existence which is in each one and called spirituality. The more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good.

"Then be you this! The more such men any country produces, the higher is that country raised. That land where no such men exist is doomed. Nothing can save it. Therefore my Master's message to the world is, 'Be ye all spiritual! Get ye first realisation!' And to the young and strong of every country he would cry that the time was come for renunciation. Renounce for the sake of humanity! You have talked of the love of man, till the thing is in danger of becoming words alone. The time is come to act. The call now is, Do! Leap into the breach, and save the world!"

The message of Sri Ramakrishna Deva briefly told is one of intense light and love, of infinite harmony and toleration and of selfless service and sublime renunciation, and its peace-producing and soul-refreshing charm has reached each nook and corner of this vast globe. May his great memory ever stay with us! May his sublime message ever spur us on to unselfish work! And may we ever walk in the light of his footsteps and prove each one of us a tiny centre of active beneficence in our own families, communities and nations! May the sweet notes of his lyre ever ring melodious in our hearts and may we ever carry with us in all our activities of life his sweet cheer, and sweeter grace!

## VIVEKACHUDĀMANI

(Continued from page 91.)

न योगेन न सांख्येन कर्मणा नो न विद्यया ।

ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वबोधेन भोक्तुः सिद्ध्यति नान्यथा ॥५६॥

56. Neither by Yoga, nor by Sankhya, nor by work, nor by learning, but by the realisation of one's identity with Brahman is Liberation possible, and by no other means.

[None of these, if practised mechanically, will

bring on the highest knowledge—the absolute identity of the Jiva and Brahman—which alone, according to Advaita Vedānta, is the supreme way to liberation.

'Yoga' may mean Hathayoga which strengthens the body.

According to the Sankhya philosophy liberation is achieved by the discrimination between Purusha and Prakriti. The Purusha is sentient but inactive,



and all activity belongs to Prakriti, which is non-sentient, yet independent of the Purusha. The Sankhyas also believe in a plurality of Purushas. These are the main differences between the Sankhya and Vedanta philosophies.

*Work*—Work for material ends, such as getting to heaven and so forth, is meant.

Compare Svetasvatara Upa. III. 8.—‘Seeing Him alone one transcends death, there is no other way.’]

वीणाया रूपसौन्दर्यं तन्त्रीवादनसौष्ठवम् ।  
प्रजारञ्जनमात्रं तन्न साम्राज्याय कल्पते ॥५७॥

57. The beauty of a guitar’s form and the skill of playing on its chords serve merely to please some persons, they do not suffice to confer sovereignty.

वाग्वैखरी शब्दभरी शास्त्रव्याख्यानकौशलम् ।  
वैदुष्यं विदुषां तद्वद्भुक्तये न तु मुक्तये ॥५८॥

58. Loud speech consisting of a shower of words, the skill in expounding Scriptures, and likewise erudition—these merely bring on a little personal enjoyment to the scholar but are no good for Liberation.

[ Book-learning to the exclusion of realisation is deprecated in this and the following Slokas.

*Loud speech*.—Speech is divided into four kinds according to its degree of subtlety. *Vaikhari* is the lowest class, and represents articulate speech. Hence, dabbling in mere terminology is meant.]

अविज्ञाते परे तत्त्वे शास्त्रार्थातिस्तु निष्फला ।  
विज्ञातेऽपि परे तत्त्वे शास्त्रार्थातिस्तु निष्फला ॥५९॥

59. The study of Scriptures is useless as long as the highest Truth is unknown, and it is equally useless when the highest Truth has already been known.

[ Prior to realisation, mere book-learning without Discrimination and Renunciation is useless as it cannot give us Freedom, and to the man of realisation, it is all the more so, as he has already achieved his life’s end. ]

शब्दजालं महारण्यं चित्तभ्रमणकारणम् ।  
स्वतः प्रयत्नाज्ज्ञातव्यं तत्त्वज्ञैस्तत्त्वमात्मनः ॥६०॥

60. The Scriptures consisting of many words are a dense forest which causes the mind to ramble merely. Hence the man of wisdom should earnestly set about knowing the true nature of the Self.

अज्ञानसर्पदण्डस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानोपधं विना ।

किमु वेदैश्च शास्त्रैश्च किमु मन्त्रैः किमौषधैः ॥६१॥

61. For one who has been bitten by the serpent of Ignorance the only remedy is the knowledge of Brahman; of what avail are the Vedas and Scriptures, Mantras and medicines to such a one ?

न गच्छति विना पानं व्याधिरौषधशब्दतः ।  
विनाऽपरोक्षानुभवं ब्रह्मशब्देन मुच्यते ॥६२॥

62. A disease does not leave off if one simply utter the name of the medicine, without taking it; (similarly) without direct realisation one cannot be liberated by the mere utterance of the word Brahman.

अकृत्वा दृश्यविलयमज्ञात्वा तत्त्वमात्मनः ।  
ब्रह्मशब्दैः कुतो मुक्तिरुक्तिमात्रफलैर्नृणाम् ॥६३॥

63. Without causing the objective universe to vanish and without knowing the truth of the self, how is one to achieve liberation by the mere utterance of the word Brahman?—it would result merely in an effort of speech.

[ *Without causing...vanish*.—By realising one’s identity with Brahman, the one without a second, in Samadhi, one becomes the pure Chit (knowledge absolute), and the duality of subject and object vanishes altogether. Short of this, ignorance which is the cause of all evil is not destroyed. ]

अकृत्वा शत्रुसंहारमगत्वाखिलभूश्रियम् ।  
राजाहमिति शब्दानो राजा भवितुमर्हति ॥६४॥

64. Without killing one’s enemies, and possessing oneself of the splendour of the entire surrounding region one cannot claim to be an emperor by merely saying, ‘I am an emperor.’]



आत्मोक्तिं खननं तथोपरिशिलाद्युत्कर्षणं स्वीकृतिं  
निक्षेपः समपेक्षते नहि बहिः शब्देस्तु निर्गच्छति ॥  
तद्वद्ब्रह्मविदोपदेशमननध्यानादिभिर्लभ्यते ।  
मायाकार्यतिरोद्धितं स्वममलं तत्त्वं न दुर्युक्तिभिः ॥

65. As a treasure hidden underground requires (for its extraction) competent instruction, excavation, the removal of stones and such other things lying above it and (finally) grasping, but never comes out by being (merely) called out by name, so the transparent Truth of the Self, which is hidden by Maya and its effects, is to be attained through the instructions of a knower of Brahman, followed by reflexion, meditation and so forth, but not through perverted argumentations.

[ *Nikshepah*—something remaining hidden. The idea is—one must undergo the necessary practice. ]

तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेन भवबन्धविमुक्तये ।  
स्वैरेव यत्नः कर्तव्यो रोगादाविव पण्डितैः ॥६६॥

66. Therefore the wise should, as in the case of disease and the like, personally strive by all the means in their power to be free from the bondage of repeated births and deaths.

यत्स्वयाद्य कृतः प्रश्नो वरीयाच्छास्त्रविन्मतः ।  
सूत्रप्रायो निगूढार्थो ज्ञातव्यश्च मुमुक्षुभिः ॥६७॥

67. The question that you have asked to-day is excellent, approved by those versed in the Shastras, aphoristic, pregnant with meaning and fit to be known by the seekers after Liberation.

[ *Aphoristic*—terse and pithy. ]

शृणुष्ववहितो विद्वन्मया समुदीर्यते ।  
तदेतच्छ्रवणात्सद्यो भवबन्धाद्विमोक्षसे ॥६८॥

68. Listen attentively, O learned one, to what I am going to say. By listening to it you shall be instantly free from the bondage of Samsara.

मोक्षस्य हेतुः प्रथमो निगद्यते  
वैराग्यमत्यन्तमनित्यवस्तुषु ।  
ततः शमश्चापि दमस्तितिक्षा

न्यासः प्रसक्ताखिलकर्मणां शृणु ॥६९॥

69. The first step to Liberation is the extreme aversion to all perishable things, then follow calmness, self-control, forbearance, and the utter relinquishment of all work enjoined in the Scriptures.

[ *Aversion, calmness etc.*—These four have been defined in Slokas 20—24. Cf. Sruti—शान्तो दान्त उपरतस्तितिक्षुः ।

*All work*: all work done with motive, including the good ones prescribed in the Shastras and those that are evil—which men do prompted by their own nature. ]

ततः श्रुतिस्तन्मननं सतत्त्व-  
ध्यानं चिरं नित्यनिरन्तरं मुनेः ।

ततोऽविकल्पं परमेत्य विद्वा-  
निद्वैव निर्वाणसुखं समृच्छति ॥७०॥

70. Then come hearing, reflection on that, and long, constant and unbroken meditation, for the Muni. After that the learned one attains the supreme Nirvikalpa state and realises the bliss of Nirvana even in this life.

[ Compare Bri. Upa. II. iv. 5. ]

*Hearing*—of the Truth from the lips of the Guru.

*Meditation*—the flowing of the mind in one unbroken stream towards one object.

*Muni*—the man of reflection.

*Nirvikalpa state*—that state of the mind in which there is no distinction between subject and object—all the mental activities are held in suspension, and the aspirant is one with his Atman. It is a superconscious state, beyond all relativity, which can be *felt* by the fortunate seeker, but cannot be described in words. The utmost that can be said of it is that it is inexpressible Bliss, and Pure Consciousness. Nirvāna, which literally means 'blown out,' is another name for this. ]

( To be continued. )



## THE CHARITABLE DISPENSARY,

R. K. MATH, BELUR.

During the year 1917, the Charitable Dispensary at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, Howrah, made a good progress, as the number of prescriptions served during the year was 15,161 as against 10,470 in 1916. This increase of about 50 p. c. was attended with a corresponding increase in the number of patients treated, which was 4372 during the year. Some of these were given diet in addition to medicines and some were treated at their own homes.

The dispensary also attracted people from distant places such as Bally, Lilloah, Ghosari, Sulkea, Belur Station etc. who were drawn from all castes and creeds, from Hindus as well as Mahomedans.

Our special thanks are due to Messrs. B. K. Paul & Co., Calcutta for supplying us with almost all the medicines free of charge. Our thanks are also due to the proprietors of the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, Messrs. D. Gupta & Co. and other private gentlemen who kindly helped us occasionally.

List of diseases treated in 1917 and the number of patients suffering from each:—

Malarial fever 2097; Diseases of the Respiratory system 253; Diseases of the Eye and the Ear 155; General diseases 89; Diseases of the Generative system 143; Of the Teeth and Gum 93; Of the Skin and its appendages 217; Of the Alimentary system 1113; Infectious diseases 33; Miscellaneous cases 179.

Classified list of the patients during the year:—  
Hindus:—Male 1552, Female 919, Children 661.  
Mahomedan:—Male 591, Female 273, Children 301. Of other religions 75.

The following donations have been received during the year 1917, for which thanks are due to the donors:—

Mr. A. R. Kumaraguru, Bangalore Rs. 3, Babu Charu Chandra Das, Calcutta Re. 1, S. J. Rajendra Kumar Dutt, Chittrakote Re. 1, S. J. Girindra Nath Roy, Cossipur Rs. 20, S. J. Gouri Kanta Biswas, Poona Rs. 2, Capt S. D. Iyer I. M. S. C/o G. P. O., Bombay Rs. 100, Dr. B. M. Bose, Yenangyat Rs. 5, S. J. Shashi Bhushan Basak, Calcutta Rs. 20, Mr. M. S. Doddabasappa, Devangiri Rs. 5, Mr. B. K. Dutt, Tangoo Rs. 2.—Total Rs. 159.

Quinine, acids and miscellaneous drugs purchased in 1917 amounted to Rs 33-2-0.

All subscriptions, donations, medicines etc. will be thankfully received by the undersigned or by the Secretary, R. K. Mission, 1, Mukherji Lane, Bagh-Bazar, Calcutta.

BRAHMANANDA

President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission,  
Belur, Howrah.

## NEWS AND NOTES.

**THE Ramakrishna Students' Home, Madras.**—We have received the annual report of the above institution for the year 1917. Started thirteen years previously, it has been providing free board and lodging and healthy environments to scores of poor students who come to the town from the outlying parts of the Presidency to prosecute their college studies. The boys who come to the town fresh from their homes are liable to be surrounded by undesirable influences and it is a pleasure to notice that some of them are taken in hand by the Home and their lives placed under noble formative influences. The Home is connected with the Ramakrishna Mission, Madras and the Swamis of the Mission exercise a beneficial and religious influence on the life of the students. Missionary bodies all over the world have taken pains to mould the lives of the young and it is a highly beneficial move that the Ramakrishna Mission, Madras, has interested itself in forming the character of the youth of Madras. Since its inception the Home has considerably expanded its work, the number of boarders having gone up from 6 to 30; the receipts also have risen to the amount of Rs. 9,543-12-5. The visitors have borne eloquent testimony to its usefulness. By thirteen years' useful work the necessity of the Home has been established. In order to make it a permanent institution, a plot of land has been secured and a fund for the construction of a building opened, of which nearly Rs. 3000 has been collected. Contributions for the building fund may be sent to Srimat Swami Sharvananda, President, Ramakrishna Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras.

**THE** ninth annual report of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bharukati, shows a progressive record of work undertaken by the above institution. Started with the object of building lives on the ideals and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and rendering social service in the form of religion, to minister to the sick and succour the needy and to exercise a beneficial influence in forming the character of the young, it has been carrying out its work faithfully and steadily. In the charitable dispensary connected with the Ashrama, it treated and nursed 61 patients; in the school, 82 poor boys received free education up to the Upper Primary standard; it also organised water-supply in several local Melas where the people suffered a great deal in former years from scarcity of water. Religious classes were also held in which our sacred scriptures were studied and discussed. In fine, the Ashrama is a glowing testimony to what every large-hearted, public-spirited man in his humble sphere in villages and townships can do to improve the lot of his fellowmen and withal to purify and broaden his own mind and heart.



THE monthly report of the R. K. Mission Sevashrama, Brindaban for the month of March 1918 shows the following out-turn of work:—Indoor patients: There were 10 old cases and 12 newly admitted of which 12 were discharged cured, 3 died and 7 were still under treatment. Outdoor patients: There were 2870 cases of which 557 were new entries and 2313 their repetitions. The receipts for the General Fund amounted to Rs. 203-14-0, and those for the Building Fund Rs. 250. The total expenses from the General Fund were Rs. 245-1-9.

THE following is the report of the R. K. Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal for March 1918:—Indoor patients: There were 3 old cases, and 10 newly admitted, of which 6 were discharged cured, 1 left treatment, and 6 were still under treatment. Outdoor patients: There were 2031 cases of which 954 were new entries and 1077 repetitions of the same. The receipts during the month were Rs. 676-1-3 and the expenditure Rs. 292-0-0. Besides the above the following gifts in kind have been received through Mahanta Chitghanananda of Chaitandeb Ashrama, Kankhal, Atta 20 srs., Ghee 12 chs. Potatoes 9 srs.

### IN MEMORIAM: SWAMI PRAJNANANDA.

IT is with deep regret that we announce the passing away of Swami Prajnananda, the President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. His passing away has been so sudden and unexpected that the adequate measure of the loss cannot be summed up so recently. A life of great promise and ripe usefulness for the work to which his life was given is thus cut off at the early age of 39. The end was peaceful and came after a not very long illness, of heart-failure on the 20th April last. A high-souled idealist his life had always been of high ideals and purposes and latterly in the lives and ideals of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna he found the Heroes whom he had been seeking and came ultimately to surrender himself whole-heartedly to their Cause. His acceptance of them tinged his whole being and changed his whole outlook on life; many times he bore testimony to his great desire to serve the Cause and although crippled in his endeavours by a failing health, it was always his one desire to be "a humble worker in the vineyard of Swamiji." To those of us whom circumstances brought in contact with him, he never failed to express the utmost kindness and geniality of spirit; to those who leaned on him in the hour of trouble and distress, he always brought infinite tenderness and protection. As President of the Advaita Ashrama, he fulfilled the different relations which it required with a

calmness and equanimity of temper which was unruffled even in difficulty. His relations with his co-workers were very sweet and pleasant, his behaviour towards them was as could be desired, and the latter found in him a friend and guide in one.

Possessed of great intellectual acumen, he had a strong grasp of the problems of the day as he understood them, and his intellectual discourses on the Vedanta Philosophy of which he was an ardent student, were very luminous and fascinating. He edited the Bengali monthly "Udbodhan" for some period, when he wrote in its pages a series of illuminating articles on the Indian problems styled "Bharater Sadhana." He conducted the Prabuddha Bharata for a period of over four years at a high standard and most of the highly intellectual articles which appeared in its pages proceeded from his masterly pen. To those who sought, he was always willing to help spiritually as much as in him lay. The one triumphant spiritual mood in him was abounding love and unflinching faith in Sri Ramakrishna, a love and faith which deepened with years. May the Lord whom he strove to love so passionately and on whom he had such unbounded faith gather him to Himself, and may his loving soul rest in sweet peace with Him! Reverently do we offer these few words in grateful and loving memory.